UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

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F R I D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

* Security Council welcomes Bosnian cease-fire agreement; urges parties to comply fully with all provisions once they come into effect.

* Secretary-General expresses serious concern after incident in Guatemala leaves 10 dead and 18 wounded; says those responsible must be brought to justice.

* United Nations and Organization of Islamic Conference hold high-level talks on mutual cooperation and coordination.

* South Africa expresses gratitude for United Nations role in overcoming apartheid; stresses links between good governance, economic growth and sustainable development.

* Iraq says it has complied with Security Council resolutions and sanctions should be lifted; United States replies Iraqi assertions have no credibility.

* Secretary-General appoints Liviu Bota as Resident Deputy to Special Envoy for Georgia and Head of UNOMIG.

* Member States owe United Nations $3.33 billion as of 30 September; $810 million owed to regular budget and $2.52 billion owed to peace-keeping and International Tribunals.

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The Security Council today welcomed the agreement by the Bosnian parties to a cease-fire requiring the termination of all hostile military activities as of 10 October, provided that utility services are restored to Sarajevo. In a statement by its President, Ibrahim Gambari (Nigeria), the Council called on the parties to cooperate with efforts to restore such services. It urged the parties to comply fully with all provisions of the agreement once they came into effect.

The Council also welcomed the decision of the Governments of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) to attend proximity peace talks by the end of the month, to be

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followed by a peace conference. It reiterated that there could be no military solution to the Bosnian conflict and urged the parties to negotiate in good faith on the basis of the Geneva Declarations of Principles of 8 September and the Further Agreed Principles of 26 September.

In addition, the Council welcomed the 3 October agreement by the Croatian Government and the local Serb authorities in eastern Croatia on guiding basic principles for negotiations. It strongly urged both parties to negotiate in good faith towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict consistent with Council resolutions.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has expressed serious concern about an incident that occurred yesterday in a returnee community in the Alta Verapaz region of Guatemala. According to preliminary reports, 10 people were killed and 18 wounded in the incident. The Secretary-General said that those responsible for it should be promptly identified and brought to justice.

The United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are jointly verifying the facts and will report on it as soon as possible. Meanwhile, the President of Guatemala has gone to the region, accompanied by a senior MINUGUA official.

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Senior officials of the United Nations and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) met yesterday at Headquarters in a follow-up to the meeting between the Secretaries-General of the two Organizations on Tuesday. They discussed issues of mutual interest to the United Nations and the OIC and ways of strengthening cooperation and coordination in the political field.

Both sides expressed satisfaction with the excellent level of cooperation between the two Organizations and agreed to hold regular consultations on issues of mutual interest.

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The Foreign Minister of South Africa, Alfred Nzo, today expressed gratitude for the courage and perseverance of the United Nations in assisting his country's struggle for democracy. He told the General Assembly that South Africa was firmly committed to: promoting national welfare, prosperity and security; strengthening cooperation in the pursuit of economic development and security in Southern Africa; peace, stability and good governance in Africa and elsewhere; South-South cooperation; and responsible international citizenship. The greatest need today was to eradicate the scourge of poverty afflicting the great mass of Africa's people.

Years of apartheid had left South Africa's majority black population with a legacy of poverty, social disintegration and political fragmentation, the Foreign Minister said. The Government's priority task was to devise a national strategy to address that situation. Good governance, economic growth and sustainable development were interdependent, he stressed. South Africa was taking a great interest in work on the Agenda for Development. The Agenda opened great possibilities for partnership between the developed and developing countries.

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Yesterday, the Foreign Minister of Iraq, Mohammed Said Al-Sahaf, told the Assembly that a "uni-polar view" had been imposed on the United Nations that contradicted the principles of the Charter. That was confirmed by Iraq's experience with Security Council resolutions for more than five years. Iraq had attempted to comply with those resolutions and hoped that a fair evaluation by the Council would lead to the lifting of sanctions.

The prolongation of sanctions was not tied to Iraq's performance, the Foreign Minister continued. It reflected a systematic plan to damage and destroy its infrastructure and developmental capabilities. It was the United States that must prove its credibility, and halt its provocations, aggression and interference in Iraq's internal affairs. It must understand that solutions lay in dialogue, and that a policy of "hegemony and crisis" could only fail.

Exercising the right of reply, United States Permanent Representative Madeleine Albright said she was stunned to hear the Iraqi Minister speak of credibility. After four years of deception, Iraq's current assertions regarding its compliance with Council resolutions had "zero credibility". Actions, not words, would make the international community treat Iraq differently, she added.

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The Secretary-General has appointed Liviu Bota as Resident Deputy to the Special Envoy for Georgia, Edouard Brunner, and Head of the United Nations Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) with effect from 1 October. Mr. Bota will coordinate United Nations political, peace-keeping and humanitarian activities in the area aimed at achieving a comprehensive settlement of the Georgian/Abkhaz conflict.

Mr. Bota will maintain direct contacts with high-level officials on the Georgian and Abkhaz sides on behalf of the Special Envoy, and consult regularly with representatives of the Russian Federation in its role as facilitator to the peace process. He will provide guidance to the Chief Military Observer of UNOMIG, who remains responsible for the Mission's day-to-day activities.

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Member States owed the United Nations a total of $3.33 billion as of 30 September, down from $3.8 billion as of 31 August, according to the latest update on the Organization's financial situation. Some $810 million was owed to the regular budget and $2.52 billion was owed for peace-keeping operations and the International Tribunals.

The United States -- the largest debtor -- owed $527 million to the regular budget and $907 million to peace-keeping. The Russian Federation owed $21 million to the regular budget and $571 million to peace-keeping.

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